

HARAMBEE FLAME

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ANNUAL AFRICAN HISTORY ISSUE

GUEST EDITORIAL: AFRO-AMERICAN HISTORY MONTH—A CELEBRATION OF OURSELVES

—R.P. Ashanti-Alexander, M.S., M.Ed.

Self-love is a powerful and liberating quality. The ability to love one's self has the same impact for a people as it does for an individual. Afro-American History Month is a time in which Africans in America can rededicate themselves toward self-love and its many ramifications at a time when to love and appreciate our African selves is considered negative and not in keeping with the American tradition.

As I reflect upon the meaning and importance of this month (February), I believe that African Americans must begin to love themselves first before they go about attempting to love others. We must love and celebrate ourselves joyfully and unashamedly and develop institutions that assist our young in continuing that valued tradition.

All that we are and must be about should promote a sense of what is good about us. We can not survive—emotionally, financially, psychologically, spiritually, or educationally—elevating others while, at the same time, depreciating and demeaning ourselves and our people. Knowing who we are and what we should be about is the active part of celebrating ourselves.

During the 1960s, the entire cultural atmosphere reflected the necessity to "know self" and to appreciate its value. The music, the dress, and the attitude of the African community was an expression of selfhood and communal commitment to celebrating our true essence. The term "Soul Brother" and "Soul Sister" indicated and affirmed the need to come together and the importance of peoplehood and unity.

But time changed and we, as a people, changed. We put away our words, packed away our clothes, cut our hair and got on with the business of earning a living. Without wanting to admit it, we compromised ourselves and our self-worth for the sake of things. In a true celebration

of ourselves, we should not have to sacrifice that which is good and honorable in us for a job(which we do not control), on the basis of a desire for social and upward mobility. In spite of all that one might have, to live empty and fragmented, without a sense of cultural and spiritual being, is not living at all. An honest and genuine celebration of ourselves assists us in coming to terms with who we are and what we should be about.

Afro-American History Month is celebrated as a reminder to us that we have a rich and vibrant heritage, one that we cannot, but in ignorance, be ashamed of. Knowing who we are and what we should be about causes us to measure ourselves by our own measuring instruments. To clarify, as I know and understand my own African beauty, I am able to see that, when I take on the habits and attitudes of another, I, in fact, demean myself and the culture that I have stolen.

As African Americans, we must learn to celebrate and appreciate our view of the world and its many and diverse dimensions. We must learn to trust our senses of sight, sound, taste, etc. and not betray our logical and intellectual assessment of the world and people around us. Selfhood can, without reservation, be equated with mindhood.

As the sons and daughters of Africa, we should use Afro-American History Month as the gathering ground for our Home-Coming. Coming together, we take the time to renew old friendships, heal and mend past hurts, evaluate our past and present, while planning for the future. Those of us who are found must search for those who are lost.

For Afro-American History Month to have any meaning and purpose beyond that of it being a time for speeches and songs, it is required that each of its days be truly a celebration of ourselves and that the other days of the year be likewise. We cannot put on an African heart, soul, and mind for twenty-eight days out of the year and expect new heights to be attained. A true celebration of our true and real African beauty involves the way we walk, talk, live, and communicate with one another. Such a

celebration without this substance stands as a mockery of the people who have given their lives in an effort to reaffirm our sense of being.

In celebrating myself, I work for the eradication of crime, drug abuse, poverty, and illiteracy--forces that negate the beauty of my people. I seek to be the candle that shines in the darkness.

Afro-American History Month is a time for more than pictures and books. It should be, and must demand from all of the sons and daughters of Africa, a true enactment of the liberating power of self-love.

-Brother Ashanti is President of the Africa Support Committee of Omaha and a student counselor.

ABOUT THIS ISSUE

As is our custom, we especially dedicate this February edition of the HARAMBEE FLAME to the richness of our African history, the history of African people throughout the diaspora. In the following pages, you will find various accounts of African lives and events that will, hopefully, serve to inspire you, uplift, and stimulate you to work harder and strive more diligently for the fulfillment of that promise of greatness that the history of our ancestors set in motion for us.

This journey through the past ends with a magnificent poem by Pharoah(King) Akhenaton, who ascended to the throne in 1372 B.C. The poem, "Hymn To The Sun," appears here, not only because of its great beauty, but because it eloquently sets before us the fact that Africans had a concept of a "Supreme Being" long before the advent of Christianity.

One final remark. "Black" is but a color. "African" designates a people. Thus, we recognize African History.

-Editor

PEOPLE

Akhenaton Akhenaton...ascended to the throne(of Egypt) in 1372 B.C...Akhenaton inherited...the greatest and richest empire any man had ever seen. With his army, he had unchallenged power, but gentle Akhenaton did not care for glory or conquest. He believed and practiced peace and charity. He ordered the chains struck from the slaves of Egypt. He abolished the use of the lash. When vassal nations rebelled, he refused to attack them, saying they could be free. Thirteen hundred years before Christ, Akhenaton preached the gospel of peace, of truth, and of brotherhood...Akhenaton, the earliest known monotheist, "gives," as Breasted says, "the first signal of the religion that the West upholds today."

Source: THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF BLACK POETRY, an anthology edited by Alan Lomax & Raoul Abdul

Antar All acknowledge...the slave Antar, as one of the founders of Arab literature. Antar's mother was the Abyssinian concubine of a desert sheik. His father refused to legitimize him until, one day when the tide of battle had turned against him, the old sheik called on Antar for help. The young man replied, "I cannot fight. A slave is only good for milking camels and binding their udders." "Charge," called the old man. "I declare you a free man." Antar charged and routed the enemy...Antar, the ex-slave, became the knightly hero of the Arab world in the violent dawn of its civilization.. And in the 6th Century the whole Peninsula rang with the deeds of this wild, black desert rider, whose songs were as thrilling as his amorous escapades...He left behind him a tremendous romantic poem of which he was the hero. .."The Romance Of Antar" became the source for the courtly romances of the Middle Ages, and so, by curious irony, it is the way of life and love of a black Bedouin that is the model and source for the European tradition of chivalry and courtly love.

Source: THREE THOUSAND YEARS OF BLACK POETRY

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FLAME Editorial Policy

The HARAMBEE FLAME, the monthly publication of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization (parent chapter of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization, Inc.) is a pan-Africanist newsletter. This means that the FLAME's priority, with respect to news and views, is African people, events and developments which affect us and are, or should be, of concern to us. The FLAME does not recognize any artificial distinction between African people based solely on place of birth. Therefore, references to African people are made on the basis of our common ancestry. An exception to this policy is the reprinting of articles, or excerpts thereof, from other publications, in which cases we do not alter the terms used therein to fit our editorial policy.

Articles contained in the FLAME do not necessarily represent the official positions of the Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization unless they are accompanied by a statement identifying the views as being those of the organization. Generally speaking, all unsigned articles are by the editor, Wopashitwe Mondo Eyen we Langa (aka David Rice).

We encourage you to submit articles to the FLAME. Please enclose with your submission a stamped, self-addressed envelope. Articles should not exceed 900 words. Short stories are subject to the same restriction with respect to length. We also welcome poetry and graphics. Send your submissions to: HARAMBEE FLAME

Attn: Editor/Mondo

Harambee Afrikan Cultural Org.

P.O. Box 2500

Lincoln, NE 68502-0500

Note on poetry submissions: We are looking for poems that make effective use of imagery, that have beauty and power, and that do not sacrifice any of the above for the sake of rhyme and/or uniform rhythm patterns. Send stuff!

Frances Harper Frances Ellen Watkins Harper established herself as the nineteenth century's most popular Black poet/activist. Born in Baltimore of free parents in 1824, she became involved in the Underground Railroad, the illegal network by which slaves were channelled North. In September, 1854, the Maine Anti-Slavery Society recognized her talents as an orator and hired her to speak across New England. In 1857-1858 she worked for the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society, speaking two or three times each day for the cause of Black freedom, attracting "large, enthusiastic audiences." In 1860 she married a Black Ohio farmer, Fenton Harper, and retired for several years to have a child. Within five months of her husband's death in 1864, Harper was again on the lecture circuit, speaking in support of the war effort. From 1865 until 1871 Harper travelled throughout the Southern United States at her own expense, living on meager donations, speaking endlessly...Until her death in 1911, Harper was a noted advocate of women's suffrage, equal rights and Black freedom.

Source: HOW CAPITALISM UNDERDEVELOPED BLACK AMERICA
by Manning Marable

Dr. Elmer Samuel Imes It was left to a Black scientist born in the United States, Elmer S. Imes, to establish definitively that the quantum theory could be extended to include rotational states of molecules. His doctoral dissertation, one of two known publications by Imes, appeared in the *ASTROPHYSICAL JOURNAL*, 1919. "Measurements of the Near Infrared Absorption Spectra of Some Diatomic Molecules" initiated the field of high resolution spectral studies. This alone earned for Imes a lasting place in both theoretical and industrial physics.

Source: WHAT THEY NEVER TOLD YOU IN HISTORY CLASS by
Indus Khamit Kush

PLACES

Melka Kontourea (On the River Awash, 30 miles south of Addis Ababa) In 1963 the traces of an ancient settlement were discovered on the banks of the River Awash. For thousands of years men used this area as a camping ground and left behind remnants of their implements on their departure. When the river overflowed in the wet season, clay settled on these successive remains, sealing beneath it a portion of the past. Archeologists have only had to scrape the site, bed by bed, to reach a settlement that goes back more than a million years. At this period the inhabitants were not so much men as very primitive hominids. Nevertheless, they used rudimentary tools made by cracking stones together, using the edges so formed to cut and scrape.

Source: THE WORLD'S LAST MYSTERIES, Reader' Digest

Nok The earliest known sculpture of ancient Nigeria comes from the earth of Nok, a small village north of the junction of the rivers benue and Niger. As early as 500 B.C., Nok supported a settled, sophisticated, and stratified society, which included naturalistic artists. The artists made sculptures in terra-cotta--"baked earth"--portraying what were probably kings, ancestral heroes, and mythical beings...These early artists mastered the techniques of producing terra-cotta, from properly mixing the clay to flawlessly firing it.

Source: THE AFRICAN KINGS by Mary Cables

The Americas Professor Alexander Von Wuthenau, Unexpected Faces in Ancient America, adds how black people were present in America in the most ancient or pre-classical times. "The startling fact is that in all parts of Mexico...archeological pieces representing Negro or Negroid people have been found, especially in Archaic or pre-Classic sites."

Riva-Palacio, a Mexican scholar stresses this point: "It

is indisputable that in very ancient times the Negro race occupied our territory Mexico...The Mexicans recall a Negro god, Ixtilton, which means 'black-face'"

Colonel A. Braghine says that he saw in a collection in Ecuador a statuette of a Negro that is at least "20,000 years old." He adds, "...Some statues of the Indian gods in Central America possess typical Negro features and certain prehistoric monuments there undoubtedly represent Negroes." The Shadow of Atlantis, pp 40-42, N.Y., 1940

Source: WHAT THEY NEVER TOLD YOU IN HISTORY CLASS by
Indus Khamit Kush

EVENTS

In the fifteenth century, when the first Portuguese, Dutch, English, French, Danes, and Brandenburgers began to set up trading posts on the West African coast, the political organization of the African States was equal, and often superior, to that of their own respective States. Monarchies were already constitutional, with a People's Council on which the various social strata were represented...Although the Negro had been the first to discover iron, he had built no cannon...Africa was therefore quite vulnerable from the technical standpoint. It became tempting, irresistible prey for the West, provided with firearms and far-ranging navies. So the economic progress of Renaissance Europe spurred on the conquest of Africa, which was rapidly accomplished. It passed from the stage of coastal trading-posts to that of annexation by Western international agreements, followed by armed conquest called "pacification"...The development of virgin lands(in the Americas) required cheap labor. Defenseless Africa then became the readymade reservoir from which to draw that labor force with minimum expense and risk. The modern Negro slave trade was considered an economic necessity prior to the advent of the machine.

Source: THE AFRICAN ORIGIN OF CIVILIZATION, MYTH OR
REALITY by Cheikh Anta Diop

The most notorious of the slave ship owners and captains was the Reverend John Hawkins of the Church of England (Anglican Church), whose flagship was named JESUS CHRIST de LOBIC. But one must remember that there was also another European-style Christian missionary, the Most Reverend Bishop Boartolome de Las Casas of the Roman Catholic Church, who in circa 1503 or 1506 C.E.(current era) was responsible for the institution of slave trading from Africa to the "New World." The first of such African slaves were the dethroned Moors of Spain, more than 4000 of whom were shipped to the Island of Hayte(Haiti), which the Spaniards had already renamed "Hispaniola."

Source: AFRICAN ORIGINS OF THE MAJOR "WESTERN RELIGIONS" by Dr. Yosef ben-Jochannan

...in the course of the seventeenth century, the freedom-loving English colonies developed a series of laws and judicial rulings to define the black situation. They were followed by laws prohibiting black-white intermarriage, laws against the ownership of property by Africans, laws denying blacks all basic political rights(limited as they were among whites at the time). In addition, there were laws against the education of Africans, laws against the assembling of Africans, laws against the ownership of weapons by Africans, laws perpetuating the slavery of their parents to African children, laws forbidding Africans to raise their hands against whites even in self-defense. Then, besides setting up legal barriers against the entry of black people as self-determining participants into the developing American society, the laws struck another cruel blow of a different kind: they outlawed many rituals connected with African religious practices, including dancing and the use of the drums. In many places they also banned African languages. Thus they attempted to shut black people out from both cultures, to make them wholly dependent neuters.

Source: THERE IS A RIVER by Vincent Harding

WORDS

"Away with prejudice and the slanderous assertion that the imbecility of the Africans renders them incapable of improvement. Let those who accuse us of inferiority, as it respects our intellect and structure, look through the dark vista of past ages, and read in the history of Hannibal and others, who were Africans, the strength of intellect, the soundness of judgement, the military skill, which existed in ancient Africa. Africa was the garden and nursery where learning budded and education sprang. From Egypt the arts of civilization were carried into Greece, and from Greece to Europe; therefore all the now civilized world is indebted to sable Africa for the arts of civilization and learning. If our ancestors were instructed and became great on the burning shores of Africa, why may not their descendants, in a milder clime, even on the continent of America?" -from "Address to the People Of Color" by David Nickens, Chillicothe, Ohio, 1832

"Another of the white destroyers intoned--for he was the priest: 'Our coming here is a high favour unto you, o heathen people. We bring you whiteness, which is godliness itself. We bring you the miracle of belief to save you from the damnation that is doubt. How could you have known before our coming unto you that a god invisible, unheard, but still known to us the whites, created this universe? How could you have known before our coming unto you that this god sent his only offspring to be a teacher unto you, an expert in how to suffer without resistance against those who make you suffer, without bitterness even, a teacher to teach you to aim for excruciating deaths after lives of pain? How, abandoned to yourselves, could you have known? Come and be saved. Come to the church, come into whiteness, come into purity. Throw your names to oblivion. Take white names, and denounce those who would fight against the whiteness of our new road. Rebels against whiteness they are, rebels against god.'" -from Ayi Kwei Armah's TWO THOUSAND SEASONS, 1979

"the pain i succumbed to each time a colored person did something. that i believed only white people did was staggering. my entire life seems to be worthless/if my own folks arent better than white folks/then surely the sagas of slavery & the jim crow hadnt convinced anyone that we were better than them. i commenced to buying pieces of gold/ 14 carat/24 carat/18 carat gold/everytime some black person did something that was beneath him as a black person & more like a white person. i bought gold cuz it came from the earth/& more than likely it came from south africa/where the black people are humiliated & oppressed like in slavery. i wear all these things at once/to remind the black people that it cost a lot for us to be here/our value/can be known instinctively/but since so many black people are having a hard time not being like white folks/i wear these gold pieces to protest their ignorance/their disconnect from history. i buy gold with a vengeance/each time someone appropriates my space or my time without permission/each time someone is discourteous or actually cruel to me/if my mind is not respected/my body toyed with/i buy gold/& weep. i weep as i fix the chains round my neck/my wrists/my ankles. i weep cuz all my childhood ceremonies for the ghost-slaves have been in vain. colored people can get polio & mental illness. slavery is not unfamiliar to me. no one on this planet knows/what i know abt gold/abt anything hard to get & beautiful/anything lasting/wrought from pain. no one understands that surviving the impossible is sposed to accentuate the positive aspects of a people." -from the character, "Maxine," in Ntozake Shange's play, SPELL #7(as contained in THREE PIECES, published in 1981)

ANNOUNCEMENTS

Chairman of the U.N.O. Black Studies Dept., Dr. George Garrison, as well as members of the Black Studies staff, will be presenting a program on African history at the February 23 Harambee Afrikan Cultural Organization meeting. Various aspects of our history will be explored by the educators, according to their respective disciplines.

On February 28, R. Paul Ashanti Alexander and Alberta Nelson will deliver a joint address at our annual Afrikan History Month program. Other activities as well are being planned for this event.

Congratulations to our Sister, and frequent contributor of poetry to the FLAME, Ella Robinson. Ella, a professor at U.N.L. has just published a paper on the poetry of Aime Cesaire in JOURNAL OF BLACK STUDIES.

THE NATIONAL WRITER is accepting 200-2000-word essays and short stories. It is also seeking submissions of cartoons, artwork, and photography. For more information, write to: G.L. Campbell; P.O. Box 24614; Chicago, ILL; 60624.

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HYMN TO THE SUN by Akhenaton

Beautiful you rise upon the horizon of heaven,
O living sun, you who have existed since the beginning of
things...

The whole world is filled with your loveliness.
You are the god Ra, and you have brought every land under
your yoke,

Bound them in with the force of your love.
You are far away, yet your beams flood down upon the earth.
You shine upon the faces of men,
And no one is able to fathom the mystery of your coming.

When you sleep in the West, beneath the horizon,
The earth is plunged in a shadow
That resembles the shadow of death.
Then men sleep in their dwellings,
Their heads muffled, their nostrils blocked,
And no one's gaze encounters that of his fellow.
Then robbers steal into houses
And filch the valuables from beneath pillows
And creep away undetected.
The lion pads forth from his lair
And poisonous creatures bare their fangs.
Oh, how dark it is!
And what a brooding silence falls over the world,
When the maker of all things slumbers in the West!

But when the dawn come you glitter on the horizon...
When day breaks, you chase away the black shades...
The Two Lands awake rejoicing,
Men rise up and stand upon their feet
With their arms stretched wide to hail your emergence!
The whole world then begins to go about its business.
The cattle champ their fodder contentedly;
Trees and plants open their leaves,
And birds forsake their nests,
Spreading their wings in adoration of your soul.
The young goats bound upwards,
And everything that flies and flaps its wings
Takes on a new lease of life when you smile upon it.
Boats are able to sail up and down the great river.
Your light illumines the highways and byways.
The very fish in the water cavort before you,
And your beams strike to the very depths of the ocean.

You nourish the germ in a woman's womb
And from the seed make man,
Guarding the child in its mother's womb,
Calming and soothing its tears.
You nurse and feed it before it is born,
You breathe life into the creatures you fashion.
On the day when the child leaves the womb
You open its mouth
And minister to its needs.
The chick inside the egg squeaks in its shell,
For you reach it and bestow upon it your breath
In order to make it live.
You give the tender chick strength to free itself
And to come crowing from the egg,
Standing immediately upon its feet.

Your rays provide nutriment for the fields,
And when you smile, they flourish
And become fruitful for you.
You ordained the seasons
To keep alive your handiwork.
You gave the winter to provide a breathing-space,
And also the summer heat.
You made the distant sky itself,
In order that you could appear resplendent there and
look down

On the world you had created.
It is you alone who shine forth
In your innumerable aspects,
Whether you are but dimly perceived
Or visible in all your splendour,
Whether you are far or whether you are near.
You have created millions of things,
Towns and cities, fields, rivers and roads.
You are the focus of every eye
When you stand at your glorious zenith.

How numerous are your works,
And how mysterious to our mortal eyes!
You are the only god, you have no peer,
You made the world after your own heart,
And you created it on your own.
You made men and beasts, you made every wild and
domesticated animal,

Everything that lives and moves upon earth,
Everything that spreads its wings and flies in
the firmament.

You made the foreign lands of Syria and Nubia,
And you made our own land of Egypt.
You decreed every man's tasks and status
And made provision for their requirements.
You allotted to everyone his livelihood and span of life.
You ordained the diverse tongues in which the peoples
speak,

Their peculiar character
And their different colourings.
You gave individuality to the various geographical regions.
You made the Nile spring from the Lower World
And gush forth lovingly
To nurture the inhabitants of our land,
Who belong to you,
Their Lord, because of your loving kindness towards them.

O Master of all lands,
You shine out above them,
Day-Sun, mighty in power;
You have brought life to the most distant countries,
And given them a Heavenly Nile
To shed its waters upon them,
To inundate their slopes with its ripples,
To irrigate the fields between their villages.
All the mortals who have been on earth
Since the beginning of time
Have been brought up to honour your son, issue of your
flesh,

Pharoah of the Two Egypts,
Who dwells with Truth...
Whose lifetime is long;
And also in honour of his revered royal wife, whom
Pharoah loves,
Mistress of the Two Lands,
The Queen who lives and flourishes
For ever and ever.

Source: 3000 YEARS OF BLACK POETRY, edited by Alan Lomax
and Raoul Abdul.